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## ***CAPTA Bill Approved by Full Committee in House***

On Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce passed the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2002 (H.R. 3839). The bill authorizes CAPTA's programs through 2007, with modest increases in authorized funding: Title I discretionary and state grants would increase from \$100 million to \$120 million, while the Title II community-based prevention grants would increase from \$66 million to \$80 million. H.R. 3839 also reauthorizes the Adoption Opportunities Act, the Abandoned Infants Assistance Act, and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act.

The bill is expected to go to the House floor in April, under "suspension of the rules," a procedure barring amendments and requiring a two-thirds vote to pass.

The Committee on Education and the Workforce reports that, if passed, H.R. 3839 will modify current law by:

- ❑ Promoting partnerships between child protective services and private and community-based organizations;
- ❑ Improving public education on the role of the child protection system and the reporting of suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect to reduce the number of false or malicious allegations;
- ❑ Improving the training, recruitment, and retention of child protective service personnel;
- ❑ Mandating child protective agencies to promptly notify any parent or guardian of any complaint of child abuse or neglect placed against them;
- ❑ Instructing the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct the fourth National Incidence Study (NIS-4), which collects data on children who have been investigated by child protection agencies and those suspected of abuse;
- ❑ Mandating the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a study on the number of infants and young children abandoned each year and their parents; and



- ❑ Extending the authorization for the transitional housing assistance program, which awards grants that provide housing assistance to victims and their dependents fleeing a domestic violence situation.

In addition, H.R. 3839 includes a number of suggestions put forth by the National Child Abuse Coalition, including encouraging linkages between child protective services and health care and developmental services for abused and neglected children. The Coalition's proposals were also carried forward to focus the basic state grants on improving the CPS infrastructure and to emphasize the prevention focus of the Title II community-based grants.

The full text of the bill is at <http://edworkforce.house.gov/markups/107th/fc/hr3839/320a1.pdf>.

## ***Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)***

Representatives Nancy Johnson (R-Conn.) and Sander Levin (D-Mich.), along with a bi-partisan group of 44 members of Congress, sent a letter to the House Budget Committee asking for full funding of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) at \$2.8 billion. The letter focused on a promise made with states over SSBG during the first welfare reform debate and cited "a recent surge in unemployment and the shortfalls in state budgets" to highlight the critical importance of SSBG funding.

## ***Strategies for Advocates from PCA America's Focus Group Conference Call***

On Thursday, March 14, PCA America hosted a conference call, which presented findings from six focus groups that were commissioned to assess attitudes concerning child abuse prevention. Geoff Garin and Gary Ferguson, two prominent Washington opinion researchers who facilitated these focus groups, were the featured guests. They shared lessons learned and recommended several strategies to effectively market child abuse prevention programs to legislators and other key policymakers.

Following are a few strategies discussed on the call:

- ❑ **Child abuse prevention advocates must persuade people to believe strongly that child abuse and neglect is a *growing* problem, and should dispense with language, which suggests it is an "emergency" or an "epidemic."** Most people see child abuse and neglect as a historically persistent problem that is more or less inevitable, and as a result it is difficult to generate a strong sense of urgency about funding and developing prevention programs.
- ❑ **Hard-data proof is extremely important to convince legislators to support child abuse prevention efforts.** Hard-data proof includes statistics indicating the link between child abuse and juvenile and adult crime and that demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs in reducing the incidence of child maltreatment.



- ❑ **It is critical to emphasize the heavy costs that child abuse imposes on this country's education and healthcare systems, since education and health care routinely emerge in public opinion as the two most important issues on which government should focus.** This will provide the link that many voters will need to persuade their legislators to commit to a greater investment in efforts to prevent abuse.
- ❑ **Advocates must focus on abuse that is regarded as preventable when selling child abuse prevention to opinion leaders and the public.** By and large, the focus group participants do not think that social programs, even very effective ones can entirely eradicate abuse and neglect. They believe that psychotic (e.g., burning a child) and pathological (e.g., sexual abuse) behaviors are not preventable and instead belong to the realms of interventions and punishment.
- ❑ **Advocates must raise awareness of the social cost of child abuse and consistently emphasize prevention of child abuse as a moral imperative.** Whereas policy and legislative insiders personally think that preventing child abuse and neglect is as important as dealing with crime and improving education, they do not believe that prevention has nearly as much power as a political issue. Abused children are an "invisible constituency" who cannot make campaign contributions or even wield their vote as a means of bringing attention to their issue. As a result, participants do not think that political leaders take any real interest in child abuse in general or prevention in particular. In addition, panelists see the situation compounded by the fact that no groundswell of support for the issue exists among voters, which allows elected officials largely to ignore the problem.

The March 14 conference call was not an end, but a point of departure. A Prevention Funding Project toolkit is forthcoming, and will include:

- ❑ A comprehensive report providing overview and analysis of the focus groups;
- ❑ A menu of resonant messages advocates can use to lobby for child abuse prevention legislation; and
- ❑ A document that outlines the problem of child abuse and neglect, and makes the case for child abuse prevention funding.

For additional information on the conference call or on the Prevention Funding Project, please contact Hume An at [han@preventchildabuse.org](mailto:han@preventchildabuse.org).

## ***Useful Resources for Advocates***

- ❑ According to a new report from the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, "Welfare Policies Matter for Children and Youth: Lessons for TANF Reauthorization," welfare reforms can affect how adolescents and younger children perform in school. The report is online at: [http://www.mdrc.org/Reports2002/NG\\_PolicyBrief/NGPolicyBrief.pdf](http://www.mdrc.org/Reports2002/NG_PolicyBrief/NGPolicyBrief.pdf).
- ❑ The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) recently released a new report on childcare policy entitled "Unfinished Agenda: Child Care for Low-Income Families Since 1996- Implications for Federal and State Policy." The report examines the experience of low-income parents, child care providers, and state child care systems. The full report can be



found online at <http://www.clasp.org/pubs/childcare/finalreport.pdf>; the accompanying policy brief can be found at <http://www.clasp.org/pubs/childcare/finalbrief.pdf>.

- ❑ The American Bar Association will host its 10th National Conference on Children and the Law on June 6-8, 2002 in Washington, D.C. The conference will address many of the tough issues facing today's lawyers, judges, non-attorney court appointed special advocates (CASA) and guardians ad litem, social workers, health professionals, and agency administrators. If you are interested in participating, please register online at <http://www.abanet.org/child/2002conference.html>.
- ❑ Subscribe to the Reauthorization Update, the Welfare Information Network's listserv, which provides a bi-weekly notification of reauthorization-related publications and announcements. If you would like to subscribe or post information to the Reauthorization Update, please send a message to [mganow@financeproject.org](mailto:mganow@financeproject.org). Additional information can be found on WIN's Reauthorization Website at [http://www.welfareinfo.org/tanf\\_reauthorization.htm](http://www.welfareinfo.org/tanf_reauthorization.htm).
- ❑ *Children of Current and Former Welfare Recipients: Similarly at Risk*, by Kathryn Tout, Juliet Scarpa, and Martha J. Zaslow, Child Trends, March 2002. Available at <http://www.childtrends.org/PDF/leaversRB302.pdf>.
- ❑ *Let Them Eat Their Words ... Marriage Reduces Poverty*, by Jennifer Garrett, Heritage Foundation, March 22, 2002. Available at <http://www.heritage.org/shorts/20020322marriage.html>.
- ❑ *The Politics of Family, The American Prospect*, Volume 13, Issue 7, April 8, 2002. Available at [http://www.prospect.org/issue\\_pages/children/](http://www.prospect.org/issue_pages/children/).
- ❑ CLASP Audio Conference on Transitional Jobs—April 12<sup>th</sup>, from 12:30-1:30 Eastern Time. For more information, visit [http://www.clasp.org/audioconference/2002\\_brochure.htm](http://www.clasp.org/audioconference/2002_brochure.htm).

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**If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please contact Hume An at [han@preventchildabuse.org](mailto:han@preventchildabuse.org).**

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